

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy:

Unity in Liberty

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The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #2: Unity in Liberty

In this sequel, Angelle continues to pursue her dream to become Cultural Royalty of Pacificland, while also trying to make her world a better place for all, in the name of the Princess's Spirit. However, the challenges are more than what she could ever imagine. The early 21st century is a time of unprecedented opportunity for those coming of age, but many young people remain left behind, and tension and dissatisfaction is the order of the day in many areas of life. The increasing pitch of the culture wars, and the influence of global movements from the Tea Party to the Occupy Protests, also combine to make Pacificland a daily ideological warzone. Can Angelle's vision, based on freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all, help change things for the better? And even if it can, will it be drowned out by competing visions? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?

For more Princess's Spirit Ideas

There are more fiction and non-fiction titles by TaraElla relating to the Princess's Spirit concept.

TaraElla also maintains a blog and (upcoming) show inspired by the Princess's Spirit, called The TaraElla Show.

Visit **www.taraella.com** to find out more.

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All events described within or in relation to Pacificland are fictional. Any resemblance to real events are coincidental.

While effort has been made to describe accurately the international historical events referenced in the book, the accuracy of such events described cannot be guaranteed.

Chapter 1

Team Angelle Did It

"Let's go home and watch the results, whatever they may be," Angelle said to her team as the polls closed, after a long day running between more than a dozen important polling stations.

"No, let's go to the Convention Center," Natalie said.

"Why?" Angelle asked.

"Well, your results party is there, of course," Natalie said.

"I'm actually not in the mood for jokes, sorry," Angelle said.

"We're not joking. Your parents paid for half of it, and we paid the rest, together. It's going to be one of the greatest nights of your life, of our lives, after all," Katie said.

It turns out that Team Angelle, as well as Angelle's mom and dad, were so confident that this would be a great result, that they booked the great hall of the Convention Center to celebrate, even before election day actually happened. Their confidence was based on late opinion polling which showed a very positive reaction to Angelle's strong stance in support of marriage equality at the debate, as well as disgust over The Values Team walking out on her again. Of course, Angelle wouldn't know yet, having decided to not look at the polls in the last few weeks.

Angelle sat in front of the big screen, nervous as the results came in. Not far away, her friends were preparing for a great party, but she didn't know what they were doing, being so absorbed.

After what seemed like an eternity, the seat count for Team Princess Spirit finally ticked over to one. Angelle was relieved, at least she kept her own seat. But she didn't want to appear too happy, after all none of her team have won yet.

By ten o'clock in the evening, it was clear that The Values Team had lost half of their seats, and will not get to decide the next leadership. There were celebrations across town. The Values Team was crumbling just four years after its very successful debut. This was really change that was happening, and happening fast.

Of course, one of the biggest celebrations was here at the Convention Center. Team Princess

Spirit had won six seats, something beyond Angelle's wildest dreams. Angelle will now be joined by Natalie, Mandel, Katie, Jordan and Daniel at the Council.

"We did it! We did it!" Natalie screamed.

"I am so proud of you," Angelle's mom said.

It was time for Angelle to give one final, short speech.

"I really have to thank all of you. You're all so great, I wouldn't be here without you.

Today has been beyond my wildest dreams. It's one of those moments where I am glad that I did not give up earlier.

That the debate went well for us, I would never have guessed. I actually expected the opposite, you know. But I just had to stand up for what I believe is right, and that's what we will continue to do."

It was now three in the morning, but Angelle was still so excited she couldn't sleep. So she took her diary out, and began to write.

"Dear diary,

Today is Victory Day for myself as well as for my team. I need to write this down so I can remember how I feel, during hard times that will inevitably come in the future.

It's still a long road ahead. I mean, my goal is still to become Cultural Royalty one day, and that will be a long road. Though six seats technically mean that I am more than halfway there. We have to keep those seats until I am over 25 and also win more, though.

But nowadays I am also interested in more than just becoming Cultural Royalty. I want to help change the Council, this country, and even the world. There's so much that needs to be changed, but a Princess never gives up, right?"

Chapter 2

The New Council

For Angelle, walking to the pickup point for Members of the Heirs Council (MHCs) had become just another fortnightly thing in the past two years. But today, for the first meeting of 2009, something was different. In her hand was the purple and yellow leader's flag of the Princess's Spirit Party. She was the leader of a team of six: Deputy Leader Natalie, Mandel, Katie, Jordan, Daniel, and herself. As they walked together, Angelle could feel her friends being both excited and anxious, yet wanting to show neither, as that would be unfitting for their new status as MHCs.

"So here comes the late MHC," Jenelle shouted, as Angelle and her team walked near. Angelle had never been late again for the pickup, but

that nickname had somehow stuck. Jenelle simply had a way with being mean.

"Guess what, we're a team now!" Natalie shouted back.

"Well, our team appears to be larger," Jenelle said, as she held out the white and dark blue leader's flag of the now re-named Grand Heritage Party. "G-H-P! G-H-P! G-H-P!" she shouted, and fifty or so people shouted back the same in unison.

"What? She's their leader now?" Katie said, surprised.

"Must have pulled some strings. She has a rich dad, you know," Mandel said.

"I don't think it matters who's their leader anyway, now that they are only a team of fifty, might I add, stupid people. The smart ones appear to have all lost their seats or defected," Jordan said.

As Angelle's pre-booked minivan pulled into the station, the team got in. They could have gotten individual state cars instead, but Angelle decided that it would look better to go together as a team. Besides, this was also the environmentally friendly thing to do, something the rising Green Party would surely appreciate, providing a better prospect for future alliances. Angelle, as the leader, sat in the front.

After twenty minutes or so on the motorway, the minivan turned into the familiar tunnel, its now familiar entrance a welcome sight for Angelle. As Angelle had now seen so many times before, the minivan navigated a series of interconnected underground tunnels, then suddenly came to a stop, in front of a giant door made of two huge metal panels.

"Agent ID and fingerprint please," announced a robotic voice.

Angelle's driver waved his ID in front of a card reader, and then proceeded to imprint his thumb on the attached fingerprint reader.

"Permission granted," the robotic voice announced.

The metal doors slid open, and revealed the giant lift, a sight that once seemed like out of movie to Angelle, but the novelty had long been lost. The car drove into the lift, and Angelle could feel it being lifted up gradually. And then it stopped. Before she knew it, the car door was being opened up.

"Welcome, the Princess's Spirit Party," a young man's voice said.

They walked together along the long Heirs' Path, laid out with red carpets just like the first time Angelle was here. "I guess I'm lucky that they finally abolished the tradition of having us carry the family sigils. It would have been heavy to carry six at a time," the young man said.

"Wouldn't they have provided a few helpers in that case?" Natalie asked.

"I don't think so. In this economy they are looking to cut costs anywhere. Which is why the sigils are gone in the first place," the young man said. "Even the red carpet is of a lower quality this year."

Angelle looked down. The carpet did look shabbier than the one that welcomed her in 2007. Nobody could really blame them, though. Welcome to the Global Financial Crisis, where financial institutions almost go bankrupt and countless people lose their jobs weekly. The quality of the carpet should be the least of concerns at this time.

As they walked into the Great Hall, Angelle noticed that the golden chairs were gone, replaced by plastic ones. She recalled something about the government selling off some gold melted from traditional chairs in multiple venues to fund an economic stimulus package at the end of last year. The young man took Angelle and her friends to a row of seats in the middle of the hall, on the left side.

"Here are your seats," he said.

"But don't the new members get to sit in the front row?" Angelle asked.

"With the new seats, the King has decided that there will now be a new seating plan," he said.

"But why are we assigned here, rather than anywhere else?" Jordan asked.

"Well, this is the left half, where the King has decided to place what he described as the opposition or the rebels. Apparently, that's what he thinks you are," he said.

"But that's unfair," Daniel said.

"King Jashor doesn't play fair," Natalie reminded them.

"Why are we in the middle, then," Angelle asked.

"I've heard that the more of a bad influence the King thinks that you are, the further to the back you are assigned. So the King must reckon that you lot are sort of OK, and you should be grateful," the young man said.

"I would take being placed on the left by Jashor as a badge of honour," the young man whispered before walking away.

Angelle could now see that Jenelle and her team were walking, triumphantly, to the very front row of the right side.

Prince Jason walked across the podium, to where there was a microphone stand. The house fell quiet.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen," he began.

"I am Prince Jason of House Wetlands. As you know, today is my last day at the Chair of the Council. So our main item of business today will be to elect a new Chairperson," Jason said.

"But first, I have an announcement for the inauguration of new Cultural Royalty. As you know, anyone in this Council over the age of 25 and has collected ten signatures from fellow MHCs can nominate. But during the nomination round of 2008, there were 55 nominations, and we can only create five new Cultural Royals per year. As Chairman, therefore, I have had to use my discretion to select this year's new Royals, as had been the case for the past 45 years consecutively. May I present to you, Prince Carlton of House Lang, Prince Vincent of House Rue, Princess Millie of House Lee, Prince Rickard of House Bonville, and Princess Tina of House Dinar!"

The five walked out from the backstage, and took their seats on stage. At least these 'thrones' haven't been melted and sold too, Angelle thought. Jason proceeded to crown them one by one. There was polite applause after each crowning.

"Now, to the matter of the new Chair. The candidates will come on stage and introduce themselves. There are a total of three candidates. After they speak, you will be given a ballot paper, on which you should number your preferences from 1 to 3. Without further delay, I invite the candidates to come on stage. Let's welcome the first candidate, Jenelle of House Lacey!"

Chapter 3

A Hung Council

"Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Jenelle, and I would be honoured to serve you as Chairwoman of the Heirs Council. But first, I know you must give your confidence in me. Here are three reasons why you should vote for me.

Firstly, I am the leader of the largest party in the Council. The Chair has traditionally been the leader of the largest party, and for good reasons. The largest party in the Council is the party that received the highest number of votes in the election, the first choice of the biggest number of people. Having the Council led by the leader of this party would mean a respect for the democratic mandate. Moreover, having a Chair with a big bloc of support ensures stability. This should be very important,

especially when the Council itself now has many minor parties.

Secondly, I believe I have the ability to ensure the financial stability and viability of the Council, more than the other candidates. Our party is well liked by business and the government, and we are on talking terms with many business leaders and government ministers. This means that, under the leadership of our party, we are more likely to secure both government funding and private sector donations. This will be very important in the tough economy out there.

Finally, the most important thing is that my leadership will mean the council continues to stand for the values my party and myself have always been strong about. As you may have seen during that debate in November last year, enemies of tradition are ready to use name-

calling and even tricky means to advance their agenda, against the wishes of the majority. As in that debate, I will have none of that. My leadership will mean that the Council will have none of that either. Elect anyone else, and they may even be a puppet of Angelle Easterner, carrying out her radical agenda for her."

"Are you allowed to use personal insults during these speeches?" Jordan said, almost angry.

"I guess they call this freedom of speech," Mandel said.

"I don't care, she can't destroy me," Angelle said. Actually she didn't mind being mentioned by Jenelle at all. Of the two hundred people here, potential new Chairwoman found her the most worthy adversary. That must be quite an honour.

"Now let us welcome the second candidate, Lucy of House Autumnner," Jason said.

It took almost forever for Lucy, a tall and skinny brunette with glasses, to walk onto the stage, as she was seated at the very back section of the left side.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Lucy, and I would be honoured to serve you as Chairwoman. I know that there are three candidates for you to choose from tonight, and I will make a very simple case of why you should choose me.

Jenelle Lacey found her way onto this stage easily, as she was seated just in front of it. I have however been placed at the very back of this room. Why? The King regards me as an enemy, that's what I have heard. Why would I

be regarded as an enemy by King Jashor? The reason is simple. I am the leader of the largest party opposing his agenda to control the Council as part of his government. While there are many minor parties elected in this Council, they are all too young and too small to be of any real force to oppose his agenda. The 50-year-old Real Democracy Party and our red and orange flag are Jashor's biggest obstacle to taking over this place. But I'm not his only enemy. In fact, the King regards most of us as enemies. As you can see, the left side, where he has placed his enemies, is a whole three rows bigger than the right side, where he placed his friends, including Miss Lacey.

Miss Lacey suggested that I may as well be a puppet for some lady named Angelle. I haven't heard of that name and I don't know what she's all about, so that's ridiculous. But I know what Miss Lacey is all about. Make no mistake, a vote for Jenelle Lacey is a vote for King Jashor to take

over this council. He has already sold the golden chairs and changed the seating plan. What's next up his sleeve? You don't want to find out too late. Vote for me and I will stop him in his tracks."

"Not another insult," Katie said.

"Free publicity is not that bad, really," Angelle said. Frankly she didn't really like being used as a political football, but she didn't want her team to get too down.

"Now, for the third and final candidate, Peter of House Waters," Jason said.

Peter was apparently seated in the second row of the left. So an enemy of the King still, but less of one.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Peter, and I would be so very honoured if you elect me as your new Chairman. But why should you choose me? The answer is clear and it lies in this very Council itself.

Both ladies who went before me mentioned that there are many minor parties in the Council today, as if that is a bad thing. But people are sick and tired of the old establishment forces, which if I want to be frank, both of them work for. The two sides may have been at war for decades, even centuries, but people like myself and other independents and minor party members are not interested in that. All we are interested in is the good governance of this Council, to provide good outcomes for young people out there, doing it tough in this economy.

Miss Autumner may pretend to be less establishment, less out-of-touch because she is from the left side, and the King has even placed her at the back. But the truth is that she is just as out of touch. She says she has never heard of Angelle Easterner. Well, the reason is because she doesn't care about minor parties or everyday people. All she cares about is her side of the establishment. Miss Lacey is even worse, implying that independent candidates like myself may as well be puppets of other people. I am no puppet, and none of us are puppets of any other. We all work together for the common good. Miss Lacey works for our current King, Miss Autumner works for the other guy who wants to be King, but I work for you."

Yellow ballot papers were handed out. The hall descended into loud chatter, as people began to discuss with their fellow party members how to vote.

"You're our leader, so you should tell us how to vote," Katie said.

"It should be a group decision, and I would also like to hear from my advisor and deputy," Angelle said.

"I think we should vote for Peter, because he is least dismissive of us naturally. And then we should of course place Jenelle last," Natalie said.

"I think I agree with your reasoning. Any objections?" Angelle said.

Prince Jason appeared on the stage again.

"The results are in," he said. "First, let us look at the first preference votes. The results are: Lacey, 42%; Autumnner, 36%; Waters, 22%."

There were cheers from Jenelle's camp.

Surely this can't be it, Angelle thought.

"Since we don't have one candidate with a majority, we had to do a bit of math here. For every first preference, a candidate was awarded with two points. For every second preference, a candidate was awarded with one point. The results are: Lacey, 193 points; Autumnner, 174 points; Waters, 233 points. Thus I announce that Peter of House Waters has been elected as your new Chairman, with his role commencing at the next meeting," Jason said.

There was applause. But through the noise Angelle could hear Jenelle scream that "it's not fair" and something like "that's not how the alternative vote works". Serves her right, Angelle thought.

Actually, Angelle herself didn't know exactly what had happened. She knew that in a conventional 'alternative vote' or 'preferential voting' system, Peter would be first eliminated and the second preferences from his votes would be counted. But this apparently wasn't what happened.

She had to check the newspapers the first instance she could get hold of a computer. Luckily, these days they are everywhere, and surely enough, Natalie had one with her.

"Lacey Robbed in Hung Council's Chair Election," the headline went. What's a 'hung council', Angelle thought. She read on.

Angelle learnt that the rules stated that in case there was no clear winner from the ballot, the outgoing Chair was to have discretion in producing a 'fair outcome'. The commentators believed that Jason did what he did precisely to prevent Jenelle becoming Chairwoman. Jason has finally showed his political colours, to the dismay of the conservatives.

But the most important thing was that it was clear that there was a so-called 'hung council', with neither establishment candidate having majority support. The term is supposed to have come from the tradition of describing election results similar to this as 'hung parliaments' in

the British system. The implications, the commentators said, is that the fierce battle for control of the Council continues, and will likely play out intensively over the next four years.

Chapter 4

The Offer of an Alliance

As Angelle and her team entered the inner courtyard today, they could see a crowd congregated in the middle of the yard, with a red and blue banner that said 'Heirs Council Freedom Fighters Alliance' in bold type.

"Is there some kind of election going on?" Megan, a new member of Team Angelle, asked.

"I don't think so. The next Heirs Council election isn't until 2012, because, thankfully, there aren't midterms anymore," Katie said.

"But it does look like there's something unusual going on," Natalie said, a bit puzzled.

As they walked nearer, Angelle could see that Jenelle and her crew were actually at the center of the crowd.

"So it's Team Princess," Jenelle said.

"Don't you like to call us Team Loser usually? Finally learnt your manners?" Natalie said, sensing that something was unusual.

"You see, maybe we shouldn't fight anymore. After all, what we are here for today is to build an alliance. You see, the anti-freedom radicals are gaining ground everywhere now, and we need a strong alliance of pro-freedom people to defend our liberties," Jenelle said.

Angelle was surprised to hear this. Jenelle and her conservatives haven't ever been so all about freedom before. After all, they don't even support the freedom to marry for some couples.

"So you're all about freedom now?" Angelle asked.

"Of course, we've always been for freedom," Jenelle replied.

"How about the freedom to marry for gay couples?" Angelle asked.

"Well, that's not really a freedom, it's a socialist illusion," Jenelle replied.

"What's so socialist about it?" Angelle asked.

"You see, the word marriage simply has always been defined as the way it is, people are always free to enter marriage according to its age-old tradition. In fact, to change the way age-old words are defined is government intrusion into long held traditions, and is therefore anti-freedom. The need to redefine this age-old word has come from socialists, who insist that everything that ever existed must be equal,

even if it means the government intruding into others' freedom," Jenelle said.

"So restrictions on freedom are okay as long as they are 'traditional', as long as they are the way things have always been?" Angelle asked.

"Maybe on this one we will just have to agree to disagree. But it's okay, you and your team can still be part of our alliance, as we do have a small minority of people who think like you. I think we can still work well together on other questions of freedom. After all, just like the Tea Party, we are a broad coalition of libertarians and conservatives, pro-liberty people of every stripe," Jenelle said.

"Did you just say Tea Party? What do you mean by that?" Megan asked.

The young man standing next to Jenelle, who Angelle and team recognised to be Jenelle's boyfriend Robert, stepped up to respond.

"Hi everyone, my name is Robert, and I am a co-founder of this movement along with your friend Jenelle. The Tea Party is the movement we are inspired by. The Tea Party movement started in the US, and is itself inspired by the historic Boston Tea Party. You know, no taxation without representation. But 'Tea' itself also stands for Taxed Enough Already. They are all about fighting big government and the way it intrudes into every aspect of our lives, and so are we. I would like to think that we are bringing the Tea Party spirit to Pacificland, to Heirs Council," he said.

"And why exactly would Pacificland need its own Tea Party," Natalie said, sounding a bit disgusted.

"Just as in America, political correctness is on the rise, and freedoms are being eroded," Robert said.

"How so?" Natalie asked, unconvinced.

"Don't you feel it everywhere? And don't you see the rise of radical groups on campus, like Change the Era? CTE is openly running a campaign to make this school even more politically correct than it is," Robert said.

"But they are a small fringe group only," Angelle said.

"But they are growing. They got more seats than your team, and are even taunting you people, spreading rumours that you regret not forming an election alliance with them," Robert said.

"We didn't enter an alliance because they don't share our values. There's nothing we regret about that," Angelle said.

"Exactly. If you enter our alliance, it will show them your true colours, and end the speculation once and for all. You need to show that you have values, that CTE's anti-freedom platform is against your values, and you can do that by

joining our alliance, and fighting against their attempts to shut down freedom," Robert said.

"Wait a minute, though. Who can trust you after what you did to us in that debate?" Natalie asked.

"I'm sorry for that. Jenelle was a bit anxious on stage, that was all. But that was last year, and I promise it will never happen again," Robert said.

"So are you coming into the alliance?" Jenelle asked.

"So you want to close the deal just like this. But are YOU sorry for what happened at the debate?" Mandel said angrily, trying to challenge Jenelle.

"I AM sorry. I was anxious. I am not used to debates, after all," Jenelle said. "But it's important for all of us that you become part of the alliance."

There was a brief silence.

"If we can't convince you, then maybe your old friend Jenny can," Jenelle said, presenting Jenny, who was at the back of the crowd all along.

"You know, I had to leave you guys because my parents and our church wouldn't allow me to be with you. I've been with Jenelle these past few weeks, and I can tell you that she's actually very nice and very sincere about our liberties. And if you join our alliance, then we can be together again. There are also many people like myself in this alliance, people who were once with Team Princess Spirit, but who had to leave because of the controversies of 2004. We would all be very happy if you can join us, so we can be in the same family again," Jenny said, presenting the sign-up sheet with a pen attached.

There was another brief silence. Then Angelle apparently moved forward, wanting to pick up the pen.

"Don't!" Natalie shouted.

Angelle withdrew her hand.

"We'll think about it," she said, and motioned for her team to leave with her.

Chapter 5

A Question of Freedom

Team Angelle was now seated in the cafeteria.

"Do you guys even know what the Tea Party is?" Natalie asked.

"I had no idea until today, to be honest," Megan said.

"I heard of it somewhere, but I haven't followed the news closely, so I don't know very much about it," Mandel said.

"And Angelle, I know you are my friend and you are the leader of this party, but I have to say this. I can't believe you almost signed us up to our local version of the Tea Party!" Natalie said, getting even angrier.

"But it would have meant that we would be a family with Jenny again, right?" Daniel asked.

"I don't care. If that girl joined the Tea Party alliance, she's a traitor and she's dead to us," Natalie said.

The rest of the team stared at Natalie, in disbelief.

"Are you okay?" Katie asked, breaking the brief silence.

"Of course I am," Natalie said. "But I really couldn't believe all of you are so ignorant about the Tea Party and what it means."

"And what does it mean?" Megan asked.

"The Tea Party are a far-right movement that will destroy our future and make life difficult for all minorities. They are people who want to take

away my sister's rights, and I will not tolerate that," Natalie said.

"How so?" Megan asked.

"Well, most of them oppose marriage equality, apparently," Mandel said.

"It's not just that. In America, where most states do not have anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people, they will block such proposals. But here, they may work to repeal such protections, meaning that people like my sister may have a hard time even finding a job or finding a suitable place to live," Natalie said.

"But aren't they for 'freedom'?" Megan asked.

"They definitely do all this justified by the idea of freedom, like the freedom of everyone out there to discriminate against my sister. Anything less is not enough 'freedom' for them, apparently," Natalie said.

Angelle had felt torn the whole day. Yes, she almost wanted to sign onto that alliance to get Jenny back. But then, Natalie was right. She could not sell out Ashley, and she almost did just that.

But it was really not just for Jenny. Angelle actually loved the idea of there being an alliance for liberty, and she had been secretly hating the way CTE had been acting as of late towards her and her team. She hated the way CTE was trying to paint her platform as a more 'cowardly' version of their own. Yes, both parties share goals in ridding this world of unnecessary wars, and of bigotry and discrimination. But the Princess's Spirit Party is fundamentally a party of liberty, because a real Princess would be respectful about the sincere wishes of everyone else, and the CTE is fundamentally a party for

the social engineering by state power of some utopia, that will not respect the wishes of those who don't agree with them. How could the two not be natural enemies, with this incompatibility in worldview? By joining an alliance for liberty, she would be showing her colours, and declaring war on CTE once and for all.

But then, some alliance based on the Tea Party probably isn't the place to be. Natalie was right, the Tea Party, though professing to be pro-freedom, appears to be made up of mainly conservatives, with many anti-gay religious conservatives in its ranks, hardly the image of freedom the Princess's Spirit Party ought to be standing for. From what Angelle has observed, the Tea Party movement often looks like an exercise in justifying and promoting conservatism using the language of liberty, like many others who had come before them in history, using and abusing the ideal of freedom

for progressive and conservative causes alike. Despite the movement saying that it is for smaller government, many of its members don't appear to have problems with exercises in big government conservatism, such as banning same-sex marriage. Unconvincing justifications for this sort of inconsistency, like the one Jenelle gave today, are commonly used. Liberty for some but not liberty for all is not liberty, and joining an alliance that willingly acts to prevent liberty for minorities is just not the right thing to do.

If anything, today's events reminded Angelle of an uncomfortable truth: the CTE isn't going to get tired of labelling Angelle and her team as cowardly CTE wannabes hiding behind the banner of freedom. Now that she's decided not to join Jenelle's alliance, she too would probably join in, painting her alliance as the real standard bearer of freedom and the Princess's Spirit Party as having CTE's agenda but justified with the

language of freedom misused, in an ironic reversal. The fact that she did something along these lines with the freedom to marry today means that the war on the 'meaning of liberty' may have already started. Play it right, and the Princess's Spirit Party may emerge as victors. But play it wrong, and they will be squeezed like the middle of a sandwich with nowhere to turn, by CTE on the left and Jenelle's Alliance on the right. The stakes have never been higher.

Chapter 6

Occupy Heirs Council

"Still not joining our Alliance?" Jenelle asked, as the Princess's Spirit Party approached the pickup point for MHCs going to Heirs Council.

"You know this offer won't be valid forever."

"Not joining now, and not joining ever," Natalie said. "We don't believe in the Tea Party, simply."

"You know, by the time CTE has torn your reputation to shreds, it would be too late to beg us to allow you in," Jenelle said. "So you need to make the right choice, and do it soon."

Suddenly, a state car with the Pacificland flag on top of it pulled into the station. Since these cars are reserved for government officials, they all knew there must be something unusual happening.

An elderly man, well dressed in a suit, stepped out. He read aloud from a letter he had in his hand.

"Members of the Heirs Council,

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the King has moved an emergency motion that the Heirs Council be suspended, and the senate has also approved this motion. This means that there will be no meeting this evening, and also no meetings until further notice.

Yours sincerely,

Brad Indi,

Chief Royal Secretary."

And then he disappeared into the car again, and drove away.

"Jashor can't arbitrarily suspend the Council. In fact, the Council has not been suspended by the King since the end of World War II. No other King has dared to do this, this is going too far!" Katie said.

"Unfortunately, we all know that Jashor doesn't like to play by the rules," Natalie said.

"I just wonder what he has up his sleeve this time," Megan said.

Angelle couldn't be so sure that King Jashor had just suspended the Council for no good reason as part of a political play. First of all, Jenelle and her Party looked genuinely surprised as they

heard the announcement. They normally know all of Jashor's pre-planned moves beforehand. Besides, the senate wouldn't have allowed this motion to pass, if it were without good reason.

"Lend me your computer for a minute please," Angelle said to Natalie.

"She forgot to bring hers, you can have this instead," Katie said, giving Angelle a phone. It was a 'smartphone', the new generation of portable phones on which you could access the internet. Once again, Katie is ahead of everyone else when it comes to technology.

Angelle knew in her heart that something wasn't right, but this still came as a surprise:

"Occupation Causes Heirs Council to be Suspended for the First Time Since 1945

The King has used his emergency powers to suspend the Heirs Council indefinitely. This is the first time Heirs Council has been suspended since 1945.

The press gallery only learnt of the fact that a group of about 200 people had been 'occupying' the underground entrance to the Heirs Council chambers for the past two weeks and refusing to leave, when the King explained his reasons for asking the senate to approve his emergency motion to suspend the Council. This development had previously been kept secret by the police, for security reasons.

The group, calling themselves Occupy Heirs Council, claims to be inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement, which has also inspired many other similar international movements, all

claiming to be standing up for the 99% against the ultra-rich 1%.

'Here in Pacificland, where King Jashor's administration is totally wedded to the interests of the 1%, where they don't care about the lives of struggling people, especially the youth, it is especially important that we take action. We have chosen Heirs Council, because inside these doors every two weeks a bunch of privileged young people, supposedly leaders of the next generation, sit and discuss the one-percent's agenda, while the rest of us continue to suffer in this economy. We even know that some sort of US Tea Party-like movement is brewing in there, which will likely call for further cuts to government programs and welfare, making even more people suffer,' the group's spokesperson told our reporters.

We will continue to bring you the latest developments."

Angelle showed it to everyone else in her Party.

"I think we should go and speak to these people. We need to reach out to them before someone else like the CTE does," Angelle said.

"But isn't it dangerous?" Mandel asked.

"I don't think so. Occupy movements overseas have rarely caused much trouble," Angelle said.

"Will we get into trouble?" Daniel asked.

"They can't arrest us or give us trouble, because we're MHCs. It would look bad for Jashor," Angelle said.

"But how will we go? The state cars are all cancelled," Katie said.

"We can always get a taxi," Angelle said.

"I will have to drop you people off here, as I don't have authorization to enter that tunnel. But it will just be a five minute walk to the gate," the taxi driver said.

One by one, they leapt through the barriers, and entered the tunnel. Fifty or so meters in, they found themselves in almost complete darkness, because the lights had been turned off by the authorities, as is the case whenever the Council is not meeting. Luckily, Katie's phone provided some light. While the team had been here many times before, walking on the ground in the dark was an entirely different experience. Walking through the deserted, dark tunnel actually felt like an adventure. And doing it with your friends was even more exciting.

They all knew they had to be quiet, as they didn't want to attract any attention.

And suddenly, they could see that there was literally light at the end of the tunnel. It appeared to be from quite a few bundles of fire, on the ends of torches. They were getting close to the action.

It looked almost surreal at first. Not only were there many people moving about, going on about their lives, there were also makeshift beds, foldable tables and chairs, a mini kitchen and a temporary cafe, a mini library full of books, even a medical station staffed with trained nurses. These people looked like they were serious about staying for the long term.

"It's just like Occupy Wall Street," Katie remarked.

"Only that it's underground and in a cave-like environment," said Natalie, almost in disbelief.

Chapter 7

The Struggling Youth

A young man stepped up to Angelle and her friends.

"Hi, my name is Carlo, and I am the media outreach representative for Occupy Heirs Council. Which media organisation are you people from?" he said.

"We're actually not from any media organisation," Natalie said.

"What are you here for, then?" Carlo asked.

"My name is Angelle and I am the leader of the Princess's Spirit Party in the Heirs Council. These are my fellow team members," Angelle said.

"So you're MHCs? Wondering why you can't have your meeting today?" Carlo asked, raising his voice and speaking in quite a sarcastic tone.

With that, Angelle could now see a crowd of people moving towards where they were.

"The enemy is here," screamed one of them.

"Maybe we can talk?" another one seemed to say.

"Should we ... leave?" Mandel asked.

"No, stay. This won't be too dangerous," Angelle said.

The crowd were now all around them.

"Privileged people, do you know how much your College tuition and your regular pointless meetings cost us?" a young man said.

"Do you even know how much privilege you lot are in?" a young woman chimed in.

"Let's not get hostile here, at least not without proper talk first," another young man said.

"There's nothing to discuss with these people, because they know nothing of our lives. They are the 1%," a third young man yelled.

"Quiet!" Carlo yelled.

They went almost silent. Carlo apparently has their respect here.

"So by now, you lot should know that you are not very popular here. In fact, I must say, we believe the silent majority of young and even not-so-young people of this country are sick and tired of the brats of Heirs Council, and can't wait to see it abolished. I, in particular, hate this young lady called Jenelle, who after her loss at

the internal leadership election two years ago behaved as if the whole world owed her something, as if she was entitled to anything. I don't know much about you lot, but to me you look like a similar type," Carlo said.

"We're not with Jenelle's party," Natalie said.

"Doesn't make you any different though. You're all the same," Carlo said.

"You must be mistaken, for Jenelle hates us. There's even a website dedicated to the Jenelle-Angelle rivalry. Check it out if you want to," Katie said.

"You're two sides of the same coin, then. But you're really the same. Just privileged brats who think the world owes them everything," Carlo said.

"How can we be the same if we're on opposite sides?" Mandel asked.

"You're all just part of the system, part of the establishment that allocates all the privilege to

yourselves, and leaves nothing for the rest of us," Carlo said.

"But that's not what I stand for!" Angelle said, almost angrily.

"Perhaps you don't consciously know what you stand for, then," Carlo said.

"Hey, check this out!" a young man in the crowd said, pointing to his 10" tablet computer, which definitely looked too 2010s to belong in this caveman-like environment. Everyone turned and gathered around him instead.

Angelle could barely see what was going on, but she caught a glimpse that they were looking at the Jenelle vs Angelle blog. Apparently they have never even seen it before, unlike everyone at Royal College and everyone at Heirs Council.

"Does any of this matter? We don't care about these things, right?" somebody said.

"I think perhaps we can talk to these people. They do seem different," another person said.

"How are they different? I can't see it," someone else said.

"Angelle's actually, well, cool," another voice said.

A bearded young man walked towards Angelle.

"Let me speak," he said, and they all went quiet again.

"Hi, my name is Chee, and I am one of the co-founders of the movement," he said. "You see, we tend to think of MHCs as privileged people who don't care about us. But since you actually took the trouble to come down here, maybe we should talk. I believe in conversation."

"I'm glad that you are willing to talk. That's why we are here. To try and understand what's going on," Angelle said.

"And I'm glad that you seem to have an open attitude. What do you want to know?" Chee asked.

"I want to know why you are doing this. What do you think is wrong with our society?" Angelle asked.

"The short answer is, everything's wrong. The King and his government only look after the rich kids, those with both the money and the connections required to get anywhere in this economy. He tells us to start a business, but when we don't even have enough to live on and are repaying college debt too, how's that feasible? Especially in this economy, most new businesses go down in less than two years. For a rich kid it may just be a dent in their dad's savings, but for poor kids, if they somehow managed to get a loan to start the business,

when it goes under they will have a liability they can't repay for decades. I could go on and on, but you people in Heirs Council are basically set up for life, so you will not understand any of this, but the fact that you are so assured of a great life while everyone else struggles, don't you think that's unfair?" Chee said.

"But Heirs Council seats are not for life," Natalie said.

"Sure. But even if you lose your seat, then so what? A graduate of Royal College with history on the Heirs Council is not going to go without at least a great job, right?" Chee said.

This made Angelle think. Chee was right, they were privileged. But then, they were working for everyone's welfare too.

"But Heirs Council exists to work for all young people's welfare. Would you rather it not exist," she said.

"Theoretically it should. But it doesn't. It doesn't ever stand up to the King's neglect of our lives. In fact, it's always too afraid to stand up to the King. Make no mistake, Heirs Council is just another arm of the King's tyranny," he said.

"Actually, in the Council there are the King's friends on one side, and the King's enemies on the other side. We have been placed by the King himself on the side of his enemies," she explained.

"His so-called enemies. Too busy having pointless arguments with his friends to challenge what he's doing to us all," he said.

"Maybe some of them are like this. But we're different. We care about the world around us too," she said.

"You all say that, don't you?" he said.

Angelle paused to think about how she could show that she was, indeed, meaning to do something different.

"Not so different in reality, are you?" Chee said.

"Well, we can't show you anything here, right? But you can come to our Policy Conference," Angelle said.

"So you allow common people to help you make policy? For real?" Chee said.

"It's something we're starting only this year. We've only been elected as a team this term, after all," Angelle said.

"To tell you the truth, I'm still sceptical, but we may have a look at this. How many of us can go?" Chee asked.

"All of you are welcome! It's going to be at the Grand Hall of the Royal College, at, um, 6pm on

um, the 1st of November 2011," Angelle said, trying to make up the details as she went along, thinking of a time when the Grand Hall would definitely be available for bookings. "Can you spread the word for me?"

"I'll definitely do that," Chee said.

"So you're hanging out with these people. You know, they're supposed to be the ones you hate. You should know your enemies, Occupiers," a voice from behind said. Angelle turned her head, and saw that a team of Change The Era 'volunteers' in their uniforms had arrived.

"Who are you?" Chee asked.

"We're Change The Era, the only party in Heirs Council that believes in real change. All others, including this young lady's party, are no different from each other."

"You all say that, right?" Carlo asked.

"Well, look up Change The Era and our platform online, and you'll see why we are actually different. Unlike the Princess's Spirit party, whom, by their very name, is all about royal-like privilege."

"It's not! That's not what the Princess's Spirit is! You know it, and you're deliberately lying," Angelle said, angrily.

"Well, we don't want a fight of MHCs here, so maybe it's best that you both leave now," Chee said. "All you MHCs, you have to leave now. Or do I need someone to escort you out?"

Chapter 8

A Quarter Life Problem

"You should have joined us. That way, we can change the world together," one of the CTE people said, as they headed down the dark tunnel.

"But since our kind of change isn't the same as your kind, I don't think it will work this way," Natalie replied.

"What's wrong with our 'kind of change' then?"

"You propose using coercion to change people. You also don't mind ruining others' lives if they don't agree with you. You don't even believe in freedom and democracy. We can't stand for that."

"You know, all this freedom of conscience thing may sound good, but we're actually at war here, and it should be all about winning. Surely it's

better than letting Jashor and Jenelle win, right?" the CTE guy said.

"Not necessarily. You know, it may not be wise to swap one type of tyranny with another," Angelle said.

As they approached the underground highway, they could already see the CTE van parked at the entrance to the stub tunnel. As the CTE people marched towards their van, Angelle signalled her team to stay back, and walk as slowly as possible.

"They didn't let you speak to them?" a guy on the van said.

"They would have, if not for those stupid Princess people already being there first."

"Lesser-evil lesser-conservatives always ruin real progress. That's why they are even worse

than the real conservatives. I guess we have to come back tomorrow then. This takeover must happen, it will give us real profile and real leverage for the first time ever."

Angelle wasn't surprised about how the CTE guy had described them, but this was proper confirmation that they didn't ever actually see Team Princess's Spirit as allies.

"Now that they are gone, it's time to head back in," Angelle told her team.

As Team Angelle headed back into the Occupy area, they could hear track after track of familiar music being played. Angelle noticed that it was all music that was popular around

the late 1990s. As they got nearer, Angelle also noticed that people were all getting up and dancing.

"It seems we're in luck. This time there'll be no need to negotiate, we can just dance our way into the center of the action," she said.

"I like this track," Angelle could hear someone screaming as a new track came on. Angelle gave the signal for her team to start dancing.

As expected, the crowd was so involved in the music that Team Angelle easily swam their way into the heart of the Occupy area. It was actually much bigger than they previously thought it was. And right now, the center of attention was actually a DJ with a portable DJ-ing kit, connected to several loudspeakers. This was the source of the music.

When the track stopped, Angelle stepped up to the DJ.

"So you have a request?" he said.

"Not really, Mr DJ. You see, I am new here, and I want to know why you are playing all this 90s music," Angelle said.

"So you don't have a request?"

The DJ picked up his mic.

"No further requests? Then my work here is done for now! Thank you people!" he shouted.

"By the way, you just missed out on a big party, girl," the DJ said.

"What party?" Angelle asked.

"You don't know? I see, you're really new to Occupy. Every other day at six in the evening we play some 90s music, to cheer up. Obviously we missed the last time because I was sick, so if you

arrived here in the last four days you wouldn't know what I'm talking about," he said.

"But why 90s music?" she asked.

"It all began with the 90s appreciation group. You see, the 90s appreciation group is all about 90s culture," he said.

"So there's a dedicated 90s appreciation group? Is there a dedicated appreciation group for other decades as well?" she asked.

"Of course not. The 90s were the best, simply. But it may just be our view of things," he said.

"Why?" she asked.

"I guess it was because we were kids back then, and life was easier and better. I mean, this whole 90s appreciation thing started with several guys going through a quarter life crisis and trying to get their mood up using 90s music," he said.

"What's a quarter life crisis?" Angelle asked. She had heard of a mid-life crisis, but not this one.

"It's somewhat like a mid-life crisis, but it happens in your 20s or early 30s. It's all about dissatisfaction in life, thinking that you could do better but not knowing how to get there, and often a severe fear of permanent failure. There's also the fear that the decisions you make now will trap you forever in the future, especially with everything being so hard to achieve nowadays," he said.

"And is it a common thing?" she asked.

"It's probably very common here, you know, dissatisfied people come to Occupy more than anyone else. But apparently a recent study found that about a third of young adults have similar problems. The bottom line is that, we are a generation who were raised to dream big, and yet many of us can't even do as well as our parents did back then," he said.

"So the 90s thing is like, escapism, right?" she asked.

"I guess you could say that, but I wouldn't put it so simply. You see, once upon a time, we had hope in life, and life was more, well, magical. We want to revisit the past to bring back some of this magic, I guess," he said.

This sounds like a real problem that needed solving, Angelle thought. Maybe the Princess's Spirit could help. But she needed to talk with these troubled young adults first, and maybe introduce them to the Princess's Spirit ideas.

"So you people like 90s stuff. Guess what? I love 90s stuff too. Why don't we have a 90s party some time?" Angelle offered.

"But we have Occupy now, and we can't go anywhere for now," he said.

"It would just be an evening," she said.

"Maybe it'll work, thinking about it. We do need a break from this cave-like existence," he said.

"Give me your e-mail and we can organise it together," she said.

Chapter 9

The Princess's Spirit Vision of Freedom

The Grand Hall is all decked out in yellow and purple, and Angelle and her friends are sitting on the stage, waiting for the clock to strike six, when the doors will open.

"How many people do you think are coming?"
Katie asks.

Angelle can't give a confident answer. In fact, in the current political climate, she can't be sure that more than a few are interested. Still, it is important to keep team morale up.

"Maybe about half the hall?"

Angelle's original fears were unfounded. In fact, the hall almost filled up, to her surprise. She even recognised a few faces from the Occupy movement. She couldn't tell whether this would be a good thing or not, however, as Occupy had now become synonymous with CTE.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen," Angelle began, slightly nervously.

"Welcome to the Princess's Spirit Party's policy conference. This is a process in which we invite you to tell us all about your values, concerns and aspirations, so that we can better tailor our policies to people's needs. To this end, a questionnaire has been provided on your seats, and we wish you could take the time to fill it out after my speech. Afterwards, please drop it off at the big box provided in the refreshments area. By the way, I'm also aware that many of your friends who might have wanted to come

this evening couldn't, so this speech will also be available as an online video. No serious contender in modern politics would miss doing this, I'm sure you're aware by now.

But first, I want to outline my vision, and what I am doing in public life. Put it simply, my vision has always been one of a society where people have the opportunity to live the lives they want to, and live by the values they believe in. The Princess's Spirit is all about both standing up for what you believe in, and helping others become able to do so, too.

The core of the Princess's Spirit platform lies in the idea of freedom. No, I'm not talking about the kind of freedom the Grand Heritage Party talks about all the time. Looking at the concept of freedom from a Princess's Spirit perspective, since a Real Princess must care about everyone, our concept of freedom means we care equally

about everyone's freedom. A Real Princess simply cannot accept the idea that minorities or the economically poor must naturally have less freedom. A truly free society is not just about the freedom of your boss to fire you at will or the freedom of your local cafe to refuse to serve gay people. A truly free society also cares about the freedom of individuals to not become economic slaves or to be locked out of society just because of their sexuality. Our platform therefore specifically states that we support policies to address these issues. I must admit that, just a few years ago, even I myself was unaware of the systematic disadvantage so many people faced in society. I believe that, being the privileged people that we are, many of my fellow MHCs simply don't understand the reality out there. But I have been made to understand it, and I have been moved to be passionate about the need to correct for it. Liberty for only a few is not real liberty, after all.

On the other hand, the idea of freedom also means respect for everyone's freedom of conscience. So we oppose, for example, campaigns to make people miserable or even lose their jobs just because they appear to support a different political point of view. While we may not agree with everything in life, as a Real Princess always stands up for her own beliefs, she surely understands that others would also do so. So as long as their opponents fight fair, a Real Princess would always treat them in a fair and dignified way.

Furthermore, in a truly free society, one would be able to always be true to oneself. There would be no need to take sides and be loyal to one ideological faction or another because they appear to 'treat you better' than the other factions. In a truly free society, freedom and opportunity should be guaranteed for everyone, so there's no need for this. Therefore, our party doesn't align with one form of ideological social

engineering or another, it simply represents freedom and opportunity for all. We are here to build a society of real freedom and opportunity, not to socially engineer any particular ideological utopia.

But believe me, being true to these ideals is difficult. It has always been difficult. For example, our early stances against unnecessary wars and for the freedom of same-sex couples to marry as they wish have attracted bitterness from some conservatives, even though we are not exactly getting in the way of their lives. More recently, we have often been caught in the crossfires of the culture wars, the conservatives still putting up their old objections to us, while some self-styled progressives claim that we are not doing enough for equality. But we believe that we must achieve equality while promoting and respecting the concept of freedom too, as history has shown us that without freedom

there can never be equality in any sense. Still, it is tough to be where we are. But what would a Real Princess do? She would stay true to her values and fight to the very end for her vision. So that's what we will do.

The goal of today's conference is simple: to gather your thoughts on what you think about our vision of freedom and opportunity, and to source recommendations for specific policies we should implement towards this vision. Your questionnaire responses will be very useful to us. Thank you."

There was applause. Angelle waited for the booing, but there was none.

"Look, there's Chee and Carlo," Natalie said, as they walked towards the refreshments area on the right side of the Great Hall.

"Hi Chee, I'm glad you came. And hello to you too, Carlo," Angelle said.

"Did you like our message?" Natalie asked.

"Yes, indeed. You know, Occupy was all about real freedom and opportunity too. I hope that you will be able to achieve what Occupy could not," Chee said.

"What do you mean?" Katie asked.

"Occupy was supposed to be about freedom, and it was that way until CTE took over it. I guess our lack of structure made us vulnerable to the takeover. Anyway, by the time I quit, Occupy Heirs Council was nothing like the way it started out," Chee said.

"So you quit?" Mandel asked.

"What else could we do? The membership had become 80% CTE by then, as their people kept joining and our people kept leaving. We started all this because the system was failing us, and we simply wanted our fair opportunity in life. It was that simple. But then, it became all about CTE's imaginary utopia. It seems that they are so dedicated to their weird utopia that they are willing to trample over our one chance to get some equal opportunity. I don't think that kind of utopia is worth having, especially if that's the price," Carlo said.

"I agree. Nobody's utopia is ever worth having, if it means actual continuing injustice to people in practice," Angelle said.

"I'm glad somebody has said that. You're an inspiration to many of us, you know? In fact, here in your audience tonight are many former Occupiers who had also quit. I think they like your message too, although maybe some are just supporting you to get back at the party who stole their movement. Anyway, we all regret

telling you to go away when you came back that day and tried to warn us about CTE's plan for hostile takeover," Carlo said.

"But, maybe this is a stupid question, but how did CTE come to control Occupy, when the two weren't that related in the first place?" Katie asked.

"I guess they set their sights on taking over Occupy early on, because we were about change and overcoming oppression and solidarity, the sort of thing they profess to be about. We were valuable to them, because we were visible, and because we were authentic. It was pure political calculation," Chee said.

"But even if they wanted to take over Occupy, wouldn't that have been difficult? You were a big mass of people in your own right, I mean," Mandel said.

"They had all sorts of, well, techniques. First they introduced the so-called progressive stack at our daily forums, a system also used in some overseas Occupy movements. This system prioritised the speaking rights of those with less privilege, like women, people of color or LGBTs above others, and a moderator would control the speaking order based on privilege. I don't know how it worked overseas, maybe they really had impartial moderators, but in our case, the moderators were all CTE people, and in practice used it to select CTE speakers. Everyone who didn't agree with their agenda left, because we felt ignored," Chee said.

"And it wasn't just, you know, people with privilege. In fact, the first person to protest against this system was gay himself. He not only felt ignored like the rest of us, he felt angry that CTE was using his identity to support an agenda he did not personally agree with. For example, he felt that the CTE LGBT team, who came to speak almost every day, had a completely

different agenda to himself and his friends, yet they claimed to speak for LGBTs in general," Carlo said.

"Sounds like a tricky situation. Is there any way we can help get Occupy back on track?" Mandel asked.

"It's all over now anyway. Jashor has activated emergency powers, allowing him to clean up the mess Occupy has become next week. We're not sorry to see it go. We're just sorry that the emergency powers mean that Jashor's term will be extended by one year and that we can't get rid of him until 2013," Chee said.

"What?" Natalie asked, surprised.

"It was announced one hour ago, apparently," Katie said, reading from her phone.

Chapter 10

Culture Wars

There's about a year before the next elections, and the first opinion polls that came out last week did not have good news for the Princess's Spirit Party. They showed that the Grand Heritage Party and Change The Era were the two major parties at this point in the race, and Angelle's party was not even a major force. Angelle couldn't even know how her party was actually performing, as it was just included in a combined 'others' category. All she knew was that this cannot be good news.

Still, she has to do something to raise her profile, even in this early stage, to tell everyone that she is still in the race. So today, Team Angelle is going into the Inner Courtyard, raising their yellow and purple banners, and spreading their message to whoever wants to listen.

As they entered the Inner Courtyard, Angelle noticed that there was already plenty of yelling. She became worried that, even with the help of the loudspeaker she had brought along with her, nobody would hear her properly.

"We stand with Occupy! Boycott all pro-Jashor businesses!" a voice was yelling, over and over again.

"That's CTE and Occupy gone mad! But don't worry, we will stand for freedom!" Jenelle yelled back.

"Yeah, the freedom for women, minorities and LGBT people to continue to be oppressed!" CTE shouted back.

Angelle reflected on the sad state of both Heirs Council politics and Pacificland politics more

generally right now. Discussion had descended into a war-like stage, with nothing constructive being done. The people are fed up, but nothing is changing. Many people know that the Grand Heritage Party was not offering real freedom, but just their own version of 'freedom'. But the other team in this war are no better, it seems. Occupy started out being about the concerns of disaffected young people, but somehow CTE took it over, and it became part of the CTE's war machine. At first, Occupiers started encouraging the boycotting of businesses that treated their employees poorly, something in line with the whole point of Occupy in the first place, and something that quite a few people were sympathetic about. But soon after, it became all about the CTE's cultural agenda, justified vaguely as 'justice'. There was a campaign to boycott businesses that have donated to King Jashor's political party, there was another campaign to boycott businesses that didn't employ enough women, and there was even one about voting to eliminate a reality TV show

contestant who opposed same-sex marriage, as if that would be 'justice' or it would change anything at all. Many people were truly fed up. It's not that people don't care about equality or justice. It's just that many people didn't believe this to be the way to go about it.

And apparently, that was not just the state of affairs in Pacificland right now, in the early 2010s. Similar situations are now found everywhere. Europe, England, the US, Australia, absolutely everywhere. Immigration, climate policy, LGBT rights, feminism, if you can name a divisive issue, it's likely to be caught up in a state of ideological wars with no good prospect of resolution. The deep and permanent divisions have prevented both sides from finding any common ground that is necessary for a good resolution, in any case.

Angelle believes that the Princess's Spirit platform can be the best circuit breaker to all this. Real freedom and opportunity for all, genuine concern for those doing it tough, and frank and rational discussions to resolve differences are what we need now. A Real Princess would stand up and proclaim these values, and use them to unite people. Yet she has been careful to act recently, not wanting to be forced to take sides on issues, or to be forced into 'alliances' that will ultimately damage her image. Local and international experience in recent times have shown that these things can happen all too easily. In these days of media sound bites, words are often taken out of context, and ideas are often distorted. And once an impression has set in, there's no use to argue otherwise.

But one cannot hide away forever either, or one would just become irrelevant. So it's time to

take a stand, no matter how high the stakes are, Angelle thought. She picked up her loudspeaker.

"Are you sick and tired of these culture wars? I am! There's an alternative: real freedom and opportunity for all! That's the only ideology we need!" she shouted, several times over, until she noticed that she was the only one shouting.

Both the CTE and the GHP had gone quiet, and people were staring at the small island of yellow and purple with Angelle in the center. For the first time in months, maybe even more than a year, there was somebody who was standing up to the 'two majors', condemning both sides for waging the war in the first place, rather than simply taking one side or the other. As Angelle noticed that people were listening to her, she used this rare opportunity to continue speaking.

"In this world, we all have hopes and dreams. We all want an opportunity to see our hopes and dreams come true, and we all want a fair playing field to support this to happen. This state of culture war not only doesn't change anything for anybody, it creates a divided platform. A platform on which people must choose one side or the other, sometimes merely because we believe one side will treat us slightly better than the other side, even if neither will offer us true freedom to be true to ourselves, and to pursue our dreams in life. And amongst this division and war, the truly heartfelt stories of people, people doing it tough in their everyday lives, are all too easily drowned out by shouting matches like the one we've just had. But there's an alternative: why don't we just put this culture war stuff aside, and come together to create a situation of real freedom and opportunity for all?" she said.

There was both applause and booing. Angelle couldn't tell which was louder.

"This young lady is misguided! The culture wars can't simply be imagined away. People are being oppressed. We must fight to win it!" CTE shouted.

Angelle really wanted to shout back, but instead signalled for her team to leave. She didn't want to get caught up in any more controversy. The battle for hearts and minds wouldn't be won in one day, anyway.

Chapter 11

Back in a Better Time

It's been four months since Angelle tried to organise a 90s-themed party with DJ Ken-Men-Pen, or just Ken for short, but she's still searching for the most important thing: a venue. Before Christmas all the venues were booked up by Christmas parties, but apparently in January they also close for a month or so, maybe because they had already made so much money.

"Hey, I've found an affordable place for your party," Jordan said.

"No, I found it first," Megan said.

"Okay, whatever. But do check this out, it's actually an underground shelter," Jordan said.

Angelle read the description. The shelter is in a suburb about 20 kilometers away, and is actually brand new. It was built for the end of the world. The ancient Mayans believed that the world will come to an end this December, apparently, and these people built the shelter for their paid clients to hide in come late December. Between now and then, however, it was available to hire as a venue for functions. And just for 200 dollars an evening!

"Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 90s Spirit Party. I'm your host, DJ-Ken-Men-Pen. Thinking about it, 2012 is indeed a scary time to be in. Some people believe the end of the world is coming later this year, it is the very reason why this shelter was

built. Thankfully, there's always music, decorations, fashion and food to help us rewind back about 15 years, to the good old times," Ken said.

"But let's face it. We'll need to come back to 2012 by tomorrow morning. But don't despair yet, we've got a way to keep some of the magic of this night alive for a long time to come. There's a big blank poster on the wall on the left-hand side, where we invite you to think about what was so good about the 90s. Write down whatever comes to your mind. At the end of the night, we'll take a high resolution photo of the whole thing, and let you take it home on a USB stick for just five dollars," Angelle said.

"Without further delay, let the party begin!" Ken said, starting the music.

As the other forty or so people partied on into the night, Angelle and her friends went over to the left wall, to inspect the previously blank poster, now more than half filled with written comments.

"Now, let's get down to our real business here tonight," Natalie said.

"Aren't we here to have fun too?" Katie said.

"You all know this is a marketing research exercise," Natalie said.

"Don't be so cynical, it's a bit of fun too. And I don't like the term marketing research, I prefer idea gathering," Angelle said.

They all read the poster together, comment by comment.

"It was more hopeful," read one.

"Everything was right then, everything is wrong now," read another.

"It was before the economy crashed," the next one read.

"We dreamt of such a bright future, for all of us," read the next one.

One comment caught Angelle's eye in particular: "Back in the 90s, we all got along, people could be friends. Nowadays everything is divided into factions, the social justice warriors vs the angry reactionaries, the green foot soldiers versus the climate sceptics, pro-gay versus anti-gay, the religious vs the atheists, and so on. I wish this would all end soon, and we can all be friends again."

And then there was another one: "In the 90s, battle lines were drawn on things like pop vs rock, or country vs hip-hop. Otherwise, people were friendly with each other. Nowadays, every issue is a battleground, and every opinion can be a cause for war. When will this madness end?"

"It appears to be all about being more hopeful back then, and the fact that people got along better back then," Katie said.

"That's the vibe I get too," Natalie said.

"What else would you have expected? That people simply like the 90s for its terrible fashion or its outdated computers?" Jordan said.

"The fashion wasn't really that bad, come on" Katie said.

"Should I make this the theme of my speech?" Angelle asked.

"I think it would be a good idea. Of course we should record it and have it online too," Natalie said.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, attention please. Our special guest of the night, Angelle Easterner MHC, would like to give a special speech," Ken said.

"Good evening again everybody,

It's my honour to be the special guest at this great party. You know, I love the 90s too.

But what's so great about the 90s? The fashion, the music, even those outdated computers we

used to use? These things are great, well probably not Windows 98 computers, but the other things were definitely great. But what a lot of us miss is how life used to be, and what the world looked like to us.

In the 90s, the world was more hopeful. Maybe part of it is the fact that many of us were brought up with the adults telling us that we were all special, that we could do anything we want. If that's the case, then it's the fault of the system that it is failing so many of us today. On the other hand, it is a fact that the world was less divided and less bitterly resentful in so many different ways back then. Sure, there were culture wars even back then, but surely not as toxic as the ones we are having today. It's why I believe we need to rise above the current divisiveness. Remember, while things don't look that good at the moment in many ways, they don't have to be this way. The dreams we had

back then still resonate, and they still have a good chance of coming true.

Anyway, while I love the 90s too, I look forward to a future that's even better. It's why I'm in public life in the first place. To work towards a better future. And I believe, if we keep the hope alive, we will get there eventually.

Thank you."

Chapter 12

We Have More In Common Than We Think

Things are looking up for Angelle. Her recent speeches on her vision of freedom and dreams for all have been popular with quite a lot of people from many different backgrounds, and she has become a somewhat popular figure for the hopeless in society to rally around. Among the ranks of new Angelle supporters are many previous Occupiers, as well as other youth facing tough times in life. On the other hand, her message also struck a chord with those apparently doing well in life, but actually feeling limited by their circumstances, such as a less than meaningful existence or an inability to really follow their heart and pursue their dreams. And finally, there are those whose vision for life focus less on themselves and more

on the wider world, many of whom who are frustrated about the current culture war dynamics causing an inability for people to unite on their common ground and move forward together. Angelle had made it clear that her vision of real freedom would include the freedom of each of these groups to pursue their dreams, and an end to the bitter divisiveness that currently dominated society. 'We have more in common than we think' has indeed become one of Angelle's main rallying cries nowadays.

Right now, another area where common ground appears to be emerging from previously opposing camps is gaining widespread attention. The recent declaration by the conservative British Prime Minister that he supports same-sex marriage as part of his conservative values has caused a rethink of the conservative attitude towards this issue worldwide. Previously, conservatives have been

mostly united in their opposition to same-sex marriage, seeing it as an attempt by radicals to redefine a historical institution. But perhaps it has been just about same-sex couples wanting to participate in the great tradition of marriage all along. If this is the case then, why should conservatives, who value lifelong commitment and stable relationships, refuse to support them? Surely, radicals have used this cause in an attempt to discredit conservative governments, churches and even marriage itself alike, but perhaps they were always just using a cause that had never belonged to them at all? Recently there has been some further evidence of this idea. Now that the conservative case for marriage equality is being heard loud and clear, some radicals have come out to reason that, perhaps, the only case ever for this idea has been the conservative case, saying that marriage equality only serves to assimilate the queer community into the conservative institution of marriage. Angelle did her research on where people actually stood, and found that

radicals were historically uncomfortable with the idea anyway, and they felt this way all the way up to the recent turn of the century and perhaps beyond that. Meanwhile, most younger generation conservatives actually support marriage equality nowadays, and some are indeed very passionate about it.

Realising all this, Angelle has decided that she will organise her own March for Marriage Equality, under the banner of advancing the issue on common ground, and of course the whole idea of the Princess's Spirit. While there have been quite a few such marches previously, they have been organised by radical left wing groups, and more conservative sections of society have felt uncomfortable attending due to the divisive, war-like attitude of those involved. Angelle thought that her march would not only provide a new way forward on the issue, but finally provide an opportunity for those who have long wanted to support the

cause but felt uncomfortable about the radicals' marches to show their support.

"Remember, no divisive slogans, and no verbal attacks on particular people or political parties. We are an inclusive group of people trying to achieve a common goal here, and the purpose of this parade is to show our fellow citizens that our cause has strong support from a diverse range of people," Angelle told the several hundred participants, before the march began.

Just as the radicals often do, today they marched through the city towards Central Park on a Saturday morning, carrying banners with all sorts of colours and descriptions, telling people which section of society they were representing. Angelle was right: her march had

been able to attract a much more diverse range of people than the radicals' marches. There were various ethnic groups and religious groups represented, and there were even groups representing people from the outer suburbs, all groups of people not traditionally thought to support marriage equality in significant numbers. The atmosphere was also very different: there was no feeling of an angry attitude at the rest of society here. In this march, we are the people, representatives of everyday citizens who simply want to improve the way things are.

At the conclusion of the march, a small group of young adults carrying the blue and white banner of the Grand Heritage Party approached Angelle. She was pleasantly surprised, as she thought that whole party saw her as the enemy.

"Thank you for doing this. You know, we have long supported gay marriage too. But when the issue was dominated by the far-left, it was unacceptable for us to come on board publicly. Hopefully after today, things will be different," a young man said.

"You know, there's indeed a lot of common ground we can work upon, no matter what our political and cultural affiliations are. Let's hope one day all this bitter divisiveness, all this progressive vs conservative stuff, will come to an end," Angelle replied.

Angelle stepped up to the podium in the middle of Central Park for a final speech to conclude the parade.

"Thank you all for coming along to show your support today. Together, we have shown the people of Pacifiland that support for marriage

equality is widespread and diverse. We have shown that it is an issue people from many different backgrounds and walks of life want to see addressed. And while we want change, most of us want it in a positive way, making it something that brings us together rather than something that divides us.

To sum up why we are here today, I have written a song. I have deliberately tried to make it positive, unlike your typical protest song, because negativity will get us nowhere. Remember, keep up the positive attitude. This song is for all of you.

SONG"

As Angelle stepped off the podium, she saw a familiar face walking towards her. She recognised that it was Jenny.

"Angelle, thanks for doing this. And by the way, can I rejoin your group?" Jenny said.

"You're always welcome to do so, if that's what you want," Angelle said.

"You know, in my heart I have never actually left you. It was just that my conservative parents saw you as a bad influence and banned me from being part of your group. Even after I became an adult, I was scared that they would be unhappy if I rejoined. But recently I have been able to convince them that you really care about people and bringing people together, and that you don't support a radical agenda for society like they may have suspected. Please forgive me for not being strong about believing in you all these years," Jenny said.

"It's alright. Family is more important than politics. I would have chosen family over politics too, if I were so unlucky to be forced to choose," Angelle said. "Come with me, the

others are waiting in that tent over there. They will be very happy to see your return."

Chapter 13

The Great Freedom Debate

Two months out from the 2012 Heirs Council elections, things are finally looking better for Team Angelle. Polling now has them running a sort of close third behind Grand Heritage Party and Change The Era, meaning that they are one of the 'big three to watch', and that they are invited to the major parties' debate. Angelle's recent popularity among previously disaffected young people and her leadership on the marriage equality issue have given them a huge boost. Meanwhile, the GHP has started to suffer for the same reasons. Increasing numbers of young people now feel that they are out of touch, and the internal division over marriage equality is starting to hurt, especially as King Jashor is still trying his best to hold the party to his own views.

After the drama of Occupy and the increased awareness about youth issues, there has also been a new drive to get young people involved in society and politics, and to allow more young voices to be heard. As part of this new attitude, there has been a new importance attached to the Heirs Council elections. In fact, this year's major parties' debate will be held in the State Auditorium in the middle of the city, rather than in Royal College, and it will also be televised. This means the stakes have never been higher, but the opportunities have never been better either.

Angelle couldn't believe it was really happening. Here they were, at the backstage area of the State Auditorium, with the debate to commence any time now.

"You ready and fired up?" Natalie asked.

"I hope so. To tell the truth, I'm a bit nervous," Angelle said.

"It's normal to feel this way. But I know you'll do well," Natalie said.

"Remember, we're all behind you," Katie said.

"Candidates, please proceed onto the stage and take your seats," announced a voice coming from the speakers.

Angelle walked out to the stage, trying to look as confident as she could. As the whole of the auditorium came into view, her first thought was how big this place was. It looked even bigger than it appeared on TV.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Great Debate for the 2012 Heirs Council elections. Tonight, we have invited the leaders of the three biggest forces in this election according to the latest polls. We bring you Jenelle Lacey of the Grand Heritage Party, Angelle Easterner of the Princess's Spirit Party, and Danielle Krad of Change The Era," the moderator announced. "Unlike previous years, we have decided to make the debate fairer and more relevant to the general public by letting our panel of journalists ask the questions. The candidates will answer the questions in a pre-determined order. So, without further delay, the first question comes from Lawrence Met of the Pacificland Liberty Daily."

"Here at the Liberty Daily we take the liberty concept very seriously. All three of you have

had plenty of things to say about liberty. So can you please give us a clear summary of your views on the idea of liberty, and how it is better than what the others have to offer?" Mr Met asked.

"We, the Grand Heritage Party, are the only true party of liberty," Jenelle began. "I don't mean to disrespect my colleagues here tonight, but how can they claim to be for liberty if they don't guarantee support for cutting the size of our government down to as small as possible? Items in their platforms call for more government intrusion, indeed. We have all sorts of proposals like anti-discrimination laws, more tax-payer money to fund health and education which will result in higher taxes, tariffs to limit free trade, and the like. There's even a proposal by CTE to severely limit free speech at all public colleges, including Royal College. I can't see how this is anything but authoritarianism."

It was Angelle's turn to speak.

"The Princess's Spirit Party will support true, practical liberty for all," Angelle began, feeling slightly more confident now, and quite passionate indeed. "The events of recent years have taught us that many people are indeed struggling out there, and without a bit of financial help they will never practically experience freedom. There are many young people out there who cannot even get a decent education and the life opportunities that come with it, without going into huge debt. Similarly, when one cannot even pay for their own health care, they effectively become a slave to anyone who can offer the money. Where's the freedom in all this? You may say people have the freedom to make themselves richer. By what? It's not like they're not willing to work. It's just that, in this economy, jobs are not always

available. You may then suggest they start their own business. With whose money do they do that?

Similarly, strong anti-discrimination laws are long overdue in Pacificland. When minorities have to face the tyranny of the majority, can you call this freedom? Many LGBT people out there have to hide in the closet just to survive, and since we the Princess's Spirit people care about everyone's freedom, we cannot just let this happen and do nothing about it. The fact that the GHP platform still opposes the freedom to marry for same-sex couples is further proof that they don't care about the freedom of certain people at all.

On the other hand, these issues aside, we are clearly for liberty. A real Princess always respects everyone else's agency and aspirations in life, and will never enslave anyone's

conscience for any grand agenda, because a real Princess actually cares about people. We support the idea of free speech, and will form an alliance with other parties to oppose CTE's proposals for bans on so-called 'cultural appropriation' and so-called 'safe speech guarantees' at colleges. We don't believe in 'safe speech guarantees' because the concept is fundamentally detrimental to human progress. Think about it. If ensuring that people feel 'safe' about your speech was ever a legitimate reason not to speak up, then nobody would ever have been able to speak up about women's rights, civil rights or gay rights in the first place, in the climate we had several decades ago. Furthermore, CTE's proposals to ban 'cultural appropriation' will lead to huge erosions in artistic freedom and the freedom of expression. Artists will live in fear that their work will be banned, especially as there is no clear line where cultural appropriation ends and intercultural inspiration begins. These examples

all show that we are indeed very strong about the concept of liberty."

Angelle hoped that she had done enough to be convincing. In her heart, she knew that her case was the strongest theoretically, but in politics, perception is everything.

"In their quest to fool us into accepting more of the status quo, both our opponents here have deliberately missed one important thing: all this talk about liberty ignores social dynamics where people are being oppressed. True liberation is where people are no longer oppressed, and only a program totally focussed on this fact like our one will bring about this," Danielle said. "You may think the GHP and the Princess Party have two very different views about liberty and society. But the truth is that they are two sides of the same coin, the so-called good cop and the bad cop. The Princess Party offers a

sympathetic ear and a slightly lesser evil set of policies, but they are still about maintaining the status quo in every way. In any case, men will still oppress women, straight will still oppress queer, and so on. In fact, if I were given the choice of only these two parties, I would rather have the GHP, because their frankness about maintaining privilege and oppression would at least make people rise up on their own."

Angelle was frustrated, and had to stop herself from yelling out 'please explain how this will be the case using clear examples' throughout Danielle's speech. However, she had expected nothing less. CTE has been about using complex and grand sounding but not actually sound theories to justify their positions, and they often mischaracterise their opponents' positions too. Encouraging a victim mentality among its followers is another classic CTE tactic. And of course they would prefer the GHP, a more

straightforward opponent, much easier to fight against.

Chapter 14

A Divide in the Pro-Equality Camp

"Candidates, thank you for your answers. Now, let's move onto the next question, to be asked by Jeremy Joh from the Pacificland National Express," the moderator said.

"The issue of same-sex marriage is a hot topic right now, especially among young people. Can you please outline how your party perceives this issue, and what your actual approach to it is?" Mr Joh asked.

Angelle was to speak first in this round.

"I have long been a strong supporter of marriage equality, and so has my party. In fact, we have paid heavy political prices for our

stance in the past decade. For us, equality before the law and the freedom to access marriage as you and your cultural or religious community sees fit is non-negotiable. A government policy against same-sex marriage is both a denial of rights against gay couples, and a favouring of one religious doctrine over another.

To achieve equality and do so satisfyingly for our society, we need to bring people together. This is an issue where a diverse range of people, from different backgrounds, of different cultures and religious beliefs, and in living in very different social settings, all want to see progress on. The challenge is to unite everyone around a common goal, and still make sure there is enough space for every voice here.

In my recent work to advance marriage equality, I have had many people come up to

me and tell me that they have, for some time, been supportive of marriage equality, but have been scared away by the common view that this is a somehow radical change to society. A more inclusive and less divisive approach has meant that more and more people have seen the truth, that this is a simple change that will affect only 2% or so of the population, and nobody else, while making our society a much fairer and freer place for all."

Angelle was happy that she was given the opportunity to say all this. It was important to spread this message and put it on record, as many times as possible, she believed.

"Of course CTE supports marriage equality. In fact, we have had nine rallies on this issue, and the Princess Party has only held one. Angelle is also right that our approach is very different. In

fact, I am concerned about the Princess Party's approach to this issue.

Marriage equality is great and necessary, as part of making things equal and ending oppression. But if we make it about assimilation and conformity, then I'd rather not have it. If achieving marriage equality means that we must bend to the wishes of religious groups and the conservative ideals of family values, then I'd rather wait until society is ready for change on our terms instead. We therefore do not welcome the so-called conservative case for marriage equality.

Angelle is both right and wrong when she says that marriage equality is a minor change. If we achieve it on her terms, it will be a minor change, a waste of a revolutionary moment. But if we achieve it as a revolution to marriage and society and a final rejection of conservative

values, then it would be a real game changer. Unlike the Princess Party, we would rather wait for real change than take breadcrumbs from the conservative table," Danielle said.

"Danielle, thank you for being honest about the intent of the gay marriage movement all along. It was never about equality or freedom. It is about destroying marriage and our sacred family values, about using a seemingly minor change to radically transform society. And in this transformed society controlled by the likes of CTE, there will definitely be less freedom. Therefore, gay marriage, far from being a reform for freedom, is actually a trojan horse against freedom," Jenelle said.

Angelle couldn't hold herself back any longer. She leapt forward and began speaking passionately.

"Both the radical hijack of marriage equality and the conservative objections based on the radical hijack have more in common than they would like to admit: both camps only care about having ideological arguments, and they don't really care about people's lives. We are talking about real couples who have been waiting for, in some cases, decades to get married. It's not about ideology, it's about freedom for all, it's about compassion, it's about humanity. I'm sick and tired of those treating this issue like a political football!"

Chapter 15

Visions for Our Future

"I would like to remind candidates that speaking out of order is not allowed. I will not give any more warnings. Our third and final question comes from Mariam Lind of the Pacificland Federal Herald," the moderator said.

"Young adults are the future guardians of our society. As such, I would like to hear what vision you, as young adults yourselves and as representatives of many other young people in our society, have for our future," Ms Lind said.

"Our vision is one of true liberation and justice for all. There are all kinds of oppression around us that people, including the currently oppressed, do not even know about yet. This is because they have not tasted true liberation

and justice. But to achieve this true liberation and justice, we first need to radically transform society. This is what Change The Era stands for," Danielle said.

"So-called progressives, including both of my opponents here tonight, like to claim that people are oppressed and want different things, when it's actually not the case. Even Danielle here has admitted that people 'do not know' about the kind of oppression CTE says they are experiencing. Well, guess what? If people don't feel like they are being oppressed, then maybe they just aren't. People want to live in societies guided by traditional values, and have their traditional liberties protected from intrusion by radicals. If this is what you want, then the Grand Heritage Party is your best friend. This is why we have performed so well in past elections," Jenelle said.

Angelle was lucky to be able to have the final word of the whole debate. She knew this could be make or break.

"Unlike both other candidates here tonight, I do not have a one-size-fits-all future intended for everyone. People should be free to pursue their lives according to their values, their consciences and their aspirations, and ideas should be allowed to compete in an equal playing field, so the best will eventually win out. It is inappropriate to centrally enforce radical change on society telling people this is what they surely want, just as it is inappropriate to centrally enforce one conservative vision. Even among people with the same kind of values and outlook in life, there are likely to be issues where they differ, like the current division over marriage equality among conservatives. We propose that people be free from having to compromise their consciences so that we can have a conformist society. Instead, we propose

that everyone should be able to show the world why their values are great, and only a truly free market of ideas will offer this chance.

Therefore, I am proud to say that the Princess's Spirit Party has no ideological outlook, other than to help everyone, including both the establishment and the radicals, and both the privileged and the disadvantaged, the chance to live out their aspirations," she said.

Chapter 16

It's Make Or Break

Angelle was feeling nervous as she and her team were on their way to Liberty Hall, the venue they had booked for election night. This time, it's either make or break. She could score enough nominations to become Royalty, or she could miss out, which may mean she will never see a better chance again.

"Don't worry, we'll do well. The polls have us in the top three," Natalie said.

"But the last polls were taken a week ago, before my final speech and the surrounding controversy," Angelle said.

"That was a masterpiece. It was a game changer. You should be proud of it," Katie said.

"I guess it represents what I want to say. I just don't know how it will be received out there," Angelle said.

Angelle was referring to a final speech she had given just two days ago, in which she said that she had never been enemies with 'conservatives', that she welcomed everyone into her tent and hoped that everyone can work together. In essence, this had always been true. She had never sought to be enemies with the pro-Jashor forces, it was just that they marked her out as an enemy. She had never sought to oppose the conservatives' agenda for the sake of opposing, she was just standing up for minorities who would suffer under that agenda, and standing up for liberty at a time when conservatives were hellbent on taking it away. And if now the 'conservatives' are changing, so should her attitude to them. Her vision wasn't a world permanently divided for the sake of division. This wouldn't be the way of a truly

worthy Princess. The Princess's Spirit is about working for the welfare of all, after all.

Of course, this has brought accusations of 'selling out' and 'pandering to the enemy'. CTE is, as expected, leading the witch hunt. Not only because Angelle is one of their major opponents in this election, but also because they can paint themselves as the only 'true progressives'. Right now, not only in Pacificland but also in many other parts of the world, many young people out there are sick and tired of the past three decades of conservatism, and would embrace anything that looked like 'truly progressive'. Angelle is worried that being seen as 'selling out' would play out badly among this growing population, whether this perception actually represents reality or not.

Still, she has no regrets about taking the stances she has taken. Just as she had believed almost a

decade ago, the most important thing for a Real Princess to do was to be true to her values and beliefs.

As they walked into the entrance of Liberty Hall, there were already a lot of reporters waiting outside. Team Angelle had become much more important than in previous elections. This was getting real.

"How do you feel about your chances tonight?" one reporter asked.

"I'm feeling confident. I'm cautiously optimistic," Angelle replied, trying her best to look happy.

As Angelle entered the main hall, she could see that it was already well decorated in yellow and purple. The refreshment bar was also ready, with plenty of food for everyone.

"It's already been set up?" Angelle asked, quite surprised.

"Of course, we're big players now, so things like these are automatically done for us. Besides, this is Liberty Hall, not some shabby venue in the suburbs. We tell them how to do it, and they do it," Katie said.

Angelle felt slightly more relieved as the results came in. The Princess's Spirit Party had won 40 seats, which would theoretically be more than enough to make her Royalty. But nowadays,

with the 'inflation' in the number of nominations actually needed due to intense competition, this number would be borderline. Still, there are likely to be independents and minor parties she could negotiate with. She believes she is still likely to get what she wants in the end.

"So we're the second largest party in there now," Natalie said, quite pleased.

"I can't believe they are stupid enough to have trusted the CTE, to give them the most seats," Jordan said.

"Well, some people just hear 'progressive' and sign up, and don't really study the policies and their implications, unfortunately. In another four years' time, hopefully they will have learnt their lesson, seeing how CTE actually operates in the Council," Katie said.

"But still, I have to say we've done well. And no, we'll never sacrifice our principles to compete with CTE, or even worse, cut deals with enemies of liberty like CTE. We didn't do it in 2006 and we won't begin to do that now," Natalie said.

"You're right. Their version of 'progress', which is to implement it over the liberties, the wishes, and even the actual livelihoods of people, is incompatible with our much more inclusive and pro-liberty vision of progress. And since we know we're right and they're wrong, why would we give in to them?" Katie said.

"So it's time to celebrate, right?" Jordan said.

"I don't know. I'm worried about how divided the whole place is now, with extremists of all types gaining a foothold in there. Besides, being second to CTE would be a weird position to play in," Angelle said.

"So you're worried?" Mandel asked, almost surprised.

"Don't worry, CTE has no mainstream appeal, and it's not like they have an absolute majority or can work with anyone else in there, so they are still as fringe as ever before despite their 50 seats. As for the division and rise of extremists, that's the case everywhere around the world in the 2010s, unfortunately," Jordan said.

"I actually think this situation will suit us well. Our talent, or should I say your talent, is to bring people together, and that should be our new theme. It will be an exciting and fruitful four years, with lots to be done," Natalie said.

"Meanwhile, I believe the big story in this election is the collapse of the GHP. Only 12 seats! Jenelle will certainly resign as leader now," Katie said.

This thought made Angelle more optimistic. Not because she hated the GHP or Jenelle. Frankly, she has bigger things to worry about nowadays. But the splintering of the GHP vote has meant that there are now many more minor parties and independents, that she can potentially court. In a reflection of the international picture, the conservatives are now fundamentally divided by things like marriage equality, paying the price for their long-standing authoritarian tendencies some would say, and they surely can't come together again as a functioning bloc any time soon. This, in turn, means that some moderate conservatives may come into the broader liberal tent, and maybe even become new allies.

Thinking about it, Angelle was confident that her strategy to bring people together would work well in an environment like this. She decided that this should be her 'theme' for now

on. Tonight's speech to the media will set the tone of things to come.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for being here with the Princess's Spirit Party tonight, as we celebrate our gains in this election. I would firstly like to thank my team, who have been working day and night to make this possible. I also thank you for your loyalty to me, personally. I also wish to thank my family, especially my mom, without whose support I wouldn't be here today.

We are well aware that our supporters come from all walks of life, including struggling young people, everyday families who just want to get

on with their lives, the increasing number of people who are sick and tired of the 'culture wars', and entrepreneurs and others with new ideas who want a chance to make their vision come true, just to name a few groups. Some people have questioned how a party supported by such a diverse range of people can work effectively for all of them. For us, it all boils down to two things: our vision of one society that works for everyone, and our belief in liberty.

Like a Real Princess, we strive to work for the welfare of a wide range of people. We simply don't leave people behind because we somehow judge that we don't like them. We also believe that people are entitled to be different, and society should be inclusive of all. Furthermore, we believe that there can be unity in diversity, and peace in difference, through a common commitment to liberty. A vision of liberty and equal opportunity will benefit

everyone in society, whether you are a struggling single mother or an entrepreneur, whether you are a social visionary or just someone who wants society to leave your family alone. It is the core of our vision.

We are grateful that a record number of voters have decided to support us. To those who have come aboard our ship in this election, we promise that we won't let you down.

Going forward, I have proposed and my team has agreed that the name of this party will be changed to Unity in Liberty, to reflect our new core mission. The Princess's Spirit is, after all, about bringing people together and working for a better deal in life for everyone. It is about coming together to ensure the best chance for all of us to achieve each of our dreams. It also is about ending the bigotry and discriminatory limitations in society, while making sure no new

taboos are established and no new outcasts are created in the process. A vision of unity in the pursuit of practical, effective liberty is the best way to achieve all of the aforementioned outcomes. Therefore, it is the truest political manifestation of the Princess's Spirit.

Thank you."

Also from TaraElla...

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #3: The 2010s Culture Wars Trap

In this finale, Angelle continues to pursue her dream to become Cultural Royalty of Pacifiland, while also trying to make her world a better place for all, in the name of the Princess's Spirit. But while Angelle believes in the Princess's Spirit vision of freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all, many conservatives and progressives alike simply do not share her vision. Similar to the situation in many other countries, the 2010s are a divisive time in Pacifiland, and those who want their message heard have to navigate wisely and strategically. But sometimes, strategy can backfire, and everything can come undone. Just when her lifelong dreams seem to come true, Angelle hits her biggest crisis ever. Meanwhile, Pacifiland gets caught up in a meaningless political stalemate, with reforms like marriage equality stalled seemingly forever. Can Team Princess's Spirit come back from the dead to save Pacifiland? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?

Also from TaraElla...

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #1: A Noughties Princess Spirit Story

The early 21st century is a time of unprecedented opportunity for those coming of age. It is a time when many young adults set out to achieve their dreams, be it starting their own business, starting a political movement, or propelling themselves to superstardom. Angelle's dream is to become Cultural Royalty of Pacificland, thus achieving what her mother couldn't. Her vision is based on freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all. However, she soon finds that whilst change appears to be in the air, the resistance is often even greater. And when the forces against change mobilise, those wanting a slice of success often bow to their agenda, while those fighting for change simply give up. With her own dreams on the line, will Angelle stay true to her values? And if she does, will it be enough to make a positive difference? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?